

Marines GOODBYES & RETURNS

Emotions Run High As Marine Loved Ones Say Goodbye, Wait for Return

▼ **NAVAL STATION SAN DIEGO** – Marines and Sailors from the 11th Marines Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) take to the rails of the USS Belleau Wood as friends and family watch from below June 15, 2002. After an intensive six month work up phase and a final farewell from their loved ones the Marines and Sailors of the 11th MEU (SOC) are ready to head out on a six month deployment to the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf Regions.

Photo by Cpl. Jose A. Avila

Since 1775, Marines have deployed to far off shores, ever ready to defend America. Whether for training or for combat, deployments are an emotional event for the families who remain behind.

As Marines deploy to battlefields in Afghanistan and Iraq to fight the war on terror, departures have become more heart wrenching. Casualty reports on radios and televisions are a grim reminder for loved ones that Marines are not invincible—some have already fallen in battle.

But, the seabags are packed and Marines prepare to board ship or plane. Their families gather for a final farewell. Tears abound before Marines ship off—spouses need one last hug, children one last kiss before Mommy or Daddy goes to war. Then, they are gone, the ship pulls away or the plane leaves the runway. Left behind at piers and airports, families begin praying and waiting for their Marines safe and speedy return.

Eventually, the months pass, battles are fought and won, and Marines come home. Again, the tears flow, this time for joy, as families reunite. **M**



▼ **Mar. 13, 2003**

Marines of Task Force Kabul, 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorism), continue to make routine convoys to Bagram, Afghanistan, for supplies as they maintain a presence in the country.

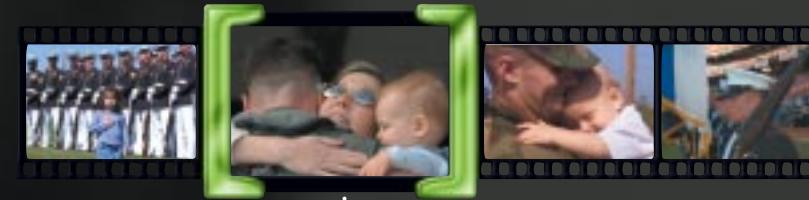
▼ **Mar. 18, 2003**

Currently, there are more than 300,000 Marines, Sailors, soldiers and airmen deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

March 2003

▲ **Mar. 17, 2003**

The United States and Britain withdraw their draft Security Council resolution and advise weapons inspectors to evacuate Iraq. During a televised address, President Bush issues an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq within 48 hours.



▼ **MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C.** –

Pam, and son Ethan hug goodbye husband and father Maj. J. J., AV-8B pilot, who departed with Marine Attack Squadron 223 in support of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) March 5.

Photo by Pvt. Rocco DeFilippis



▼ **Mar. 20, 2003**

Four Marines are killed in a CH-46E helicopter crash south of the Iraqi border in Kuwait. Three of the Marines were from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 268, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, based out of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif. The fourth was assigned to Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1, part of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing at Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma, Ariz. They were the first Marines to die in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

▼ **Mar. 21, 2003**

An unidentified Iraqi missile strikes outside Camp Commando, Kuwait, the headquarters of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. Monitor and survey teams are dispatched to the impact site, but no signs of biological munitions are found. No Marines are injured or killed.

▲ **Mar. 20, 2003**

President George W. Bush's deadline passes without response from the Saddam Hussein regime. The United States launches a pre-dawn missile attack on what President Bush calls "selected targets of military importance" in Iraq. Hours after missiles fall on Baghdad, Saddam Hussein appears on Iraqi television to denounce the attacks and rally his people.

▲ **Mar. 21, 2003**

The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force attacks and seizes the Rumaylah oil fields in southern Iraq. Only nine of roughly 500 oil wells in the Rumaylah oil fields were sabotaged by the Saddam Hussein regime.

March 2003

Mar. 22, 2003 ▼

The Department of Defense stresses the troop mail support policy. To bolster force protection, the general public is urged not to send unsolicited mail, care packages or donations to servicemembers forward deployed unless they are family members, loved ones or personal friends.

Mar. 25, 2003 ▼

Days after the 5th Marines and 7th Marines moved through Rumaylah, Iraq, encountering resistance from Iraqi forces and ultimately defeating them, a team of specialists travel through the smoke-filled desert around Rumaylah in a mission to secure and assess burning oil facilities.

Mar. 26, 2003 ▼

Marine Task Force Tarawa seizes a hospital in the southern Iraqi city of An Nasiriyah that was being used as a staging area for Iraqi para-military forces. Marines capture 170 enemy prisoners of war, locate large weapons cache and uncovered more than 3,000 chemical protective suits with masks in the hospital. Iraqi military uniforms and a T-55 tank also were found on the compound.

Mar. 27, 2003 ▼

In an interview, two wounded American fighting men, a Marine and a soldier, describe their experiences in Iraq — including how some Iraqi combatants don't play by the rules of war. The men both recall recent battles their units fought with Iraqi fighters disguised as civilians, a practice, which is a violation of internationally recognized rules of warfare, as encoded by the Geneva Convention.

Mar. 22, 2003 ▲

I Marine Expeditionary Force's headquarters element and other command and control assets convoy across the Kuwait-Iraq border and head north into southern Iraq. Marines have stood up a forward operating base from which they are now running the Corps' portion of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mar. 26, 2003 ▲

A significant sandstorm, with winds in excess of 60 knots, helps warriors of I Marine Expeditionary Force mark the end of the first week of Operation Iraqi Freedom at the Marine Combat Headquarters in southern Iraq.

Mar. 27, 2003 ▲

An Iraqi missile attack and the detection of biological agents has the U.S.-led, multi-nation task force in Kuwait City, whose mission is to respond to biological and chemical attacks, on the alert. However, the incidents are unrelated and cause no harm to the people in Kuwait.



◀ **CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. –**
Lance Cpl. Jason D. Wimer, a battalion electro-optic repair technician with 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, embraces his 10-month-old son, Austin, June 17, 2002. Wimer returned home to Camp Pendleton from a 7 1/2-month deployment with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Photo by Cpl. Jose E. Guillen